The Black Cat

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January 1904

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The Black Cat

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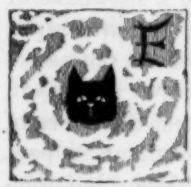
My Oriental Visitor.*

BY HARRY STILWELL EDWARDS.



XCELLENCY!"

I turned from my half-finished manuscript to find him sitting cross-legged in his baggy, red trousers behind his pack on my study floor, his dark face wearing a winning smile, his red fez tipped back. He seemed to have slipped in out of a dream; but my housemaid being an African in the second stage of her evolution, there was an easier explanation.

"Excellency?"

"That is what you said before. What next?" His left hand swept across the pack, which opened as by magic.

"Excellency, behold the triumph of Persia! 'Tis the rainbow shawl of the East!"

The shawl made a transient glory in the little room, but I shook my head gloomily.

"There would be a riot in my harem!" I said. He smiled affably. A flood of yellow sunlight burst from his mysterious pack and overflowed the shawl.

"Excellency! Silk from the street by the gate of the Forbid-

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $150 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

den City. The Empress has its mate." I only sighed and turned toward him the palms of my hands.

He drew from a cloudy heap a veil of gossamer and cast it open above his head where it floated in spirals, his graceful hand half circling beneath it like a fish's tail under a lily in crystal waters.

"Excellency! 'Tis the web of the spider at dawn where the breeze ripples run from the grass out into the blue Bosphorus!" I moaned as one in distress who refuses comfort, and turned away my face.

"Excellency! A bed of roses from the vale of Cashmere!" He used his left hand again, and unrolled with graceful gesture a gorgeous rug. The roses were all there, the hues melting into each other as in the verbena flowerets of a neglected garden.

"Hold!" I cried, "No more; or by the beard of your Prophet my soul will perish!" He waited a moment, his hand over his eyes, his lips moving as in prayer. Then from yards of scarf, silken and scarlet, as gently as one would handle a snowflake of rare form, he produced a curious box, — filagree and arabesque, silver and gilt. It opened at touch of his finger on the secret spring and, reposing on a mat of satin, was displayed a tiny cat, carved from black and white ivory, — perfect, from the curve of the tail around its flank, to the dimpled nose reposing on its paw. It would have been the representation of a cat asleep, but that, through narrow slits of eyelids, light was reflected from bits of green and yellow stones.

My visitor, lifting one hand in warning, leaned forward and noiselessly placed the cat on my table. I did not faint.

"Excellency! Effendi! Touch it not!" I looked up from a close inspection of the toy, for such it was, though well done, to find him pointing excitedly to a little picture on the study's wall that had been sent to me by my Tom who, after years at Heidelberg, was touring the world. It was a representation of a Turkish scrivener by the door of a mosque inditing a letter for a veiled houri. She was stealing time from prayer to commit the same old indiscretion. "Effendi, it is my Brother — my very Brother!" he lisped dreamily. "Allah is great. We meet again. My very Brother!" In a bound the traveller had become my professional brother-in-law; my very professional brother-in-law. Necessarily,

I handed him one of my hands, which he took reverently and laid against his forehead. There was a tear on it when he handed it back.

"And this? What soul conceived, what cunning artist carved this marvelous jewel?" There were husks on my voice.

"Excellency, 'tis a story older than the cross!"

"This is better," I said, "Allah has sent you!" Again that happy child-man smile.

"Effendi, listen! Six hundred years before your era, Euxenes, a Greek trader, travelled from Phocea, an Ionian town of Asia Minor, to find the black and white ivory combined. Ivory there was in all the great cities of the East, both black and white, but not combined. It was a saying older than the writings of the wise that it carried with it, for man, empire and the love of woman; for woman, safety and the love of man. Princes staked their hopes and kings their kingdoms for it. Men travelled afoot searching for it by land from Sheba's mines in the South to the White Sea of the North. Ships sailed every coast of the Euxine sea and out through the Tuscan and Mediterranean, into the unknown wastes beyond the pillars of Hercules in search of the wonderful ivory. They found gold and silver and cedar and precious stones. Effendi, they set the boundaries of knowledge afar; but to every one who came back, the question, 'Have you the ivory?' was asked in vain.

"To Euxenes there came one day a rumor of this hidden wonder, as it had come to hundreds before him. Back into Asia, whence they had wandered westward nine centuries before his day, there drifted a tribe of those fierce people whom Christians named Celts; and they told to a shepherd, as one tells wonder stories to the child, that in distant Gallia, near the blue sea, dwelt the invincible Segobrigians, whose chief's daughter possessed the ivory. To Euxenes, who journeyed across the mountains, the shepherds told the story in gratitude for a handful of salt, and Euxenes, fitting his best ship with trader's wares, sailed the coast to where today rises the city Masillia, or, as the Franks call it, Marseilles. I have opened this pack there, Effendi, and sold, sold, sold!—"

"He sailed to Marseilles! Go on, my Son!"

"'Twas a wooded coast, then. Landing, he found himself surrounded by a strange people, fierce, rough, but kindly. They made him welcome, for he bore a goodly shipload of arms, ornaments and wines, all of which Euxenes knew were much prized by savage people. Night falling, he was taken by the chief to his own home, that in the marriage of the chief's daughter, which was planned for that evening, he might behold the customs and the dress of the country. Euxenes did not, hearing this, fail to take with him a necklace of great beauty for the bride, which was very acceptable, being in every respect new to her people.

"Now, in this country a curious custom prevailed. No man might ask the daughter of his chief in marriage; no man might know her choice until at the wedding banquet she placed in the hand of her elected husband a goblet of wine. No man might dispute her choice, for to lift hand against the chosen one would provoke the anger of the gods.

"Euxenes sat in silent wonder by the banquet table when the beautiful Gyptis entered and, her bright eyes searching the faces turned toward her, passed slowly down the room. Presently she paused and, leaning over the board, silence having fallen on the revellers, poured into a goblet from a flagon a portion of wine, and replacing the flagon, touched her hand to the goblet. But at this moment, while bending forward, her dress being loosely planned at the throat to display her fine necklace, there slipped from her bosom a curious object which, rolling toward Euxenes, might have fallen to the floor but that he caught it by a quicker movement. He would have returned it to the owner with a graceful gesture and compliment, but suddenly his eyes read the truth. He held in his grasp the famous black and white ivory! He rose to his feet in great excitement; but before he could speak, the young woman, with a wondering gaze on her face and moving as though in a trance, reached out the goblet unto him.

"Effendi, — Excellency! Euxenes and the maiden stood a full two minutes facing each other and gazing into each other's eyes, love bringing their hearts into joyous unison, though the shouts of angry men and the flash of weapons encircled them. Then, when the chief, crashing his battle axe through the banquet board, cried, 'It is the will of the gods, touch them not!' Euxenes

stretched forth his hand. Yielding to him the goblet, the bride sank to her knees and hid her face in her arms ! Excellency, does the idle story weary ?"

"No, my Son. But your brother, — your very Brother, — has he told this tale ?"

"No, Excellency. My Brother tells only the little lies which lovers slip to each other through the lattice."

"And what next, my charming raconteur ?"

"The Segobrigians recognized the will of the gods. They yielded Gyptis to Euxenes, and with her the adjoining coast on which to build him a city. He gave her another name, Excellency, Aristoxena, which is to say 'the unrivalled hostess.' Opening up closer communication with Phocea he soon filled the section with prosperous strangers and established a commercial enterprise that continues until this day. But as may be guessed, Effendi, the Segobrigians soon repented. Their chief dead, their princess wedded to a stranger, their wonderful ivory behind the walls of a city full of skilled people, they were — unhappy. Effendi, in your country they have a phrase which covers it all, but — "

"My Son, I have heard Tom use the term 'not in it' ; which seems well adapted to this point in the career of the Segobrigians."

"Excellency ! It is perfect. The ivory was behind the walls of a city full of skilled people, and the Segobrigians were not in it. They were indeed helpless, for Euxenes was in the hands of the gods.

"Well, in time The Unrivalled Hostess raised two fine sons, the elder taking his father's name, the younger the name of Pharos. The young Euxenes, with the aid of the ivory, married the most beautiful woman of the colony and had a son of his own. Pharos, however, inherited the wandering and adventurous heart of his father and desired to travel; especially would he go back into the wonderful country whence his father's people had come and behold the monuments and splendid buildings there. In Masillia there was not much for him, being second to his brother. Besides, he wanted power and dominion.

"About this time he began to reason with a true trader's spirit that his brother, having already a wife, did not need another; and that if he was not man enough to defend his kingdom without a bit of whale's ivory — "

"Whale's ivory?"

"Excellency, so they called it. It was not, however, of the whale, but of the walrus; although until this day the ivory of Gaul is called for the whale. It is well to be truthful. I have known trades to fail because of a trivial error in speech. Facts are defenders of truth. So the Koran has it."

"Well said! But proceed. How gained Pharos the ivory?"

"A woman's weakness, Effendi. Strange, is it not, Excellency, that trouble springs always from woman?"

"Not strange when you remember, my son, that she is the mother of man. 'A woman's weakness,' — you were saying —"

"Gyptis desired of all things that her children be loved. She let them cut their teeth on the ivory; and now her grandchild was doing the same thing under its own mother. He fell asleep with it once. Pharos travelled away into Phocea, taking the black and white ivory, but unsuspected. The Gallic servants were thought to have stolen it, and were promptly executed.

"Pharos employed in secret a jeweler at whose house he tarried, to produce for him the beautiful carving that has pleased Excellency's eyes, and brought my foolish speech. Effendi, behold the stripes of white, the white spot over the eyes, the two white paws, and admit the skill of the artist!"

"He has done well, indeed. Proceed!"

"Pharos had been a welcome visitor. He now prepared to set forth on his travels, but a strange thing happened. The host who had entertained him so well was a Jew, whose daughter Deborah, had secretly fallen in love with the stranger. Seeing him about to depart, she sank into a low state of health, after the fashion of women. Pharos, being made aware of the poor girl's secret, could not bring himself to depart, lest he be guilty of the unforgivable sin of ingratitude. One may not break the bread of his host and the heart of his host's daughter without destroying his own peace."

"Well said again. Was Deborah beautiful? And did her father possess wealth?"

"Deborah was superb. Pharos discovered the fact when one day, to beguile her melancholy, he loaned her the ivory cat to wear in her bosom. The father had much money placed in many

cities at interest; for in those days the jeweler loaned money. Now they only rob. So Pharos became a Jew and married Deborah. Then, Effendi, came the gloom over Phocea. Cyrus of Persia overwhelmed the land, destroyed the city, and put many people to death, among them the unfortunate jeweler. But the soldiers who pursued Deborah as she fled to the ship where Pharos awaited her, tripped, and, falling on their swords, were slain. So Pharos and Deborah sailed unto Rome, where their descendants abided happily many prosperous years."

My visitor lit a slender Turkish cigarette, seeing that my pipe was at work, inhaled a few whiffs, and with the same inscrutable smile, as he glanced out through the windows into the cloud-patched skies, continued:

"Excellency, belief in the famous ivory had lived. The Massilians in secret searched all the countries round about. They would not have recognized it as a cat, and therein shone the wisdom of Pharos. The fever for it reached Rome, and the nobles, in the conviction that it was concealed in the North, as they came successively into power, were wont to search for it with great armies. In time they overran Gallia and the islands by the frozen sea. On the other hand, a Druid priest had seen it in a vision by the Tyrrhene. Fame of this vision spread to every tribe of barbarians beyond the Alps. Excellency has heard in this land stories that come with the mother's milk?"

"Yes, my Son. Pocahontas, Washington's hatchet; — but of these you cannot know. Though you seem to have heard of many things."

"Excellency, the search for the ivory united the vast hordes which overran Rome and destroyed the Eternal City. It lasted for centuries, and Europe became a battle ground. But no enemy ever found it. Through all the centuries it lay in the bosom of a woman. It brought no kingdom, it is true; but it brought commercial supremacy to the family. Jewelers, money-lenders, healers, — father and sons,—on down the ages. Effendi, it brought also the love of beautiful women, the love of brave, shrewd men. It wandered from Rome to Etruria, to Greece, to Smyrna, to Jerusalem, to Bagdad, to Stamboul, to Cairo, to Alexandria. Never a city of the East where money reigns but has known it.

Twenty-six hundred years have passed since Euxenes gained it. Today it lies on this your table!"

He smiled, lit another cigarette, and surveyed me genially. His fascination was irresistible. My curiosity was something, also.

"'Tis a very natural story, my son. But how came you with the priceless treasure?"

"By inheritance, Effendi. My Brother and I are descended from Pharos. Is it so wonderful? You will not deny that we are descended likewise from Abraham?"

"I deny it not," I said. "But why should you part with the wonder? The love of woman alone — ?"

"Excellency, listen. The jewel is my Brother's — in Constantinople. It has continually involved him in trouble with the women who come to him for letters; for his wife, though old, is jealous. He desires peace, let the price be what it may."

"She may cease to love him!"

"Excellency, 'tis reason enough to be rid of the ivory." My guest's face was a condensed novel. He was growing on me.

"But you! Have you no desire to be loved; to be rich?" He gave an expressive shrug, half extending his palms.

"I have had my day, Effendi. Love is a costly luxury after thirty. 'Tis a Chinese saying, but good anywhere. Rich? I have enough. And, Excellency, ours is a race that plans for centuries, not for days alone. The cat, Effendi, is wearing away. Once 'twas so!" He made the measurements of a brick in the air. "Woman's dress, the teeth of children! — alas! a few more generations and nothing will be left!"

"Gyptis, — The Unrivalled Hostess — must have been an ample woman," I said simply, waiting for my admiration to subside. He smiled again that affable smile, holding his elbow with one hand, the cigarette with the other, and gazing through his smoke spirals into the blue skies.

"Is it not so!" he murmured.

"And what value do you place on the toy, my son?"

"Excellency, the eyes are worth a hundred pounds. He smiled up fearlessly into my face. What an artist! I pondered long and well. And then I bethought me, that a son of the effete East had invaded my life and put to shame with the simple narration of a few facts, a man whose profession did not confine him to truth.

"My son," I said, taking from the little drawer of my desk a tiny nugget of gold, "I shall give you this in exchange." He took the gold and viewed it with interest. Then his eyes sought my scattered manuscript.

"Excellency writes the stories to make laughter. It must be." He said this gravely.

"No! The mere mention of my stories often brings tears. Listen, son of Stamboul! The value of the nugget in coin is five dollars; the ivory, one. The eyes, — well, we will let them pass. But the ivory has a history, and so has the gold. They both have power."

"Excellency, I listen." Likewise he smoked placidly.

"Fifty years ago, my ancestor crossed the mountains beyond which the day bathes at twilight in the wave, weary and in despair. There came over the sun a cloud that drenched, nay, all but drowned him. Darkness fell. Lightning shivered the mountains and the storm poured great torrents among the sundered rocks. The earth seemed to be drifting back into chaos from which it came, and the end of all things seemed at hand. On his knees he awaited his doom. But gradually the tumult died away, the torrents ceased to run, the rivulets dried up, the moon came forth and peace returned. It was then my ancestor fell asleep and dreamed that he was a little boy chasing fairy gold at the end of beautiful rainbows; waking to find the warm sun shining in his face. So vivid had been his dream, when he awoke and beheld in the distance a real rainbow, he rubbed his eyes to rid them of a dream fugue. But the rainbow was there, and with the same childish faith in his heart, he ran forward to reach the end of the beautiful arch where tradition has it the gold may be found. My Son — "

"Excellency, I listen!" He lighted another cigarette as he listened.

"He had all but reached the spot, when before him yawned a chasm so deep he could but hear the waters singing in its depths. Again he was on the eve of despair; but in that moment he beheld a wonderful thing; a single strand of spider silk starting from a bush before him! — "

"Excellency — Effendi — make it a rock if he is going across! A bush is not strong enough —"

"— Had floated across and found lodgment on the opposite side of the chasm. He did not hesitate. He ran over the chasm on the strand of silk and found the spot where the now vanished rainbow had rested. And there, my Son, shining among the rocks which the lightning had torn away, was the nugget which lies beside your ivory. From that spot, from that hour, arose the golden stream which has deluged the world with wealth. Europe, Asia, the far islands of the sea, it has blessed; and your wife's people who have won commercial supremacy at last, have won it because my ancestor chased a rainbow across a spider's web! Take the nugget, my son, to yonder 'very brother' of yours who is engaged in breaking up happy families. Tell him I give it in exchange for the cat, — gold for ivory, memory for memory, power for power! And now, — my time is limited. The busy hour has arrived. Allah guard you!"

My eyes last beheld him with his chin resting on his bosom and lips moving silently. His lips! one can never tell an Oriental's frame of mind from his lips. He may be laughing; or it may be that he cries when his lips are moving. I did not hear him depart, but when I looked up next, he was gone. So was my nugget.

Then I heard a voice in my left ear, very sweet indeed, usually, but now as shrill as a cricket's. The shriller a girl's voice, the greater the ecstacy behind it. A little hand covered the ivory; it disappeared, and the Princess was glorifying the scene.

"Oh, please, please! give it to me, Grandpa; — please! please!"

"What?" (Mock amazement.)

"The beautiful little black and white cat! Oh, isn't it just lovely. I'm going to have it anyway! (Sudden descent of voice to level tones.) Now get it if you can!" She had seized my jewel, kissed it frantically, and thrust it under her blouse, clenched hand and all. She stood defying me, through smiles that waited to be called back.

"And if I give it to you, what will you do?"

The little arms went around my neck. Kiss after kiss fell among my whiskers.

"I shall love you, — love you forever!" One more victory for the cat.

"Princess, begone! 'Tis my busy hour, — Hark!" We both harkened, though a deaf man could have heard the alarm. From the third floor shriek after shriek descended. I rushed to the foot of the stair. The African housemaid was also descending. For greater speed she had thrown herself on the hand rail which begins in the cupola, and she came around the last curve at a frightful rate of speed. She left most of her clothes on the newel post at the bottom, and the next instant I was struggling with her.

"For heaven's sake, girl! — what is the matter with you?"

"Red devil, Master! Red devil — upstairs — jumpin' eround by 'esef!" She left some more of her clothes with me and plunged down the kitchen steps, where she had a fit, in which the cook soon joined her. I collared my Turk on the third landing.

"What, sir! what, sir! —" but I was breathless. The inscrutable smile developed into a great laugh. He placed his hands on my shoulders and shook me gently.

"Why, Governor, — don't you know your own Tom?" he said.

The Death Pearl.*

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.

IT was the very last day. The schooner was going back to Manila on the morrow, and the divers had brought up their last loads of shell and had returned on board. The deck of the *Astrea* was littered with shells and sand, in the midst of which sat Armstrong, in pajamas and barefooted, opening the oyster, examining the interior, and flinging it upon the rattling heap in the scuppers. The treasure hunt was still fresh and fascinating to him, and whenever he found a tiny pearl he whooped with delight, while the brown Kanaka crew, looking on, grinned sympathetically.

But the operation had lost its charm for Hastings. He had pearled much in the Pacific; he had fished this very lagoon of the Sulu Seas before the American flag came to the Philippines; he had been ruined; then, after the war, he had organized this expedition in San Francisco with young Armstrong, his old school friend, almost his younger brother. The boy had just issued from Leland Stanford; he had entered college as Hastings left it, and he was delighted beyond measure to embark upon an adventure on equal terms with the man who had always been his youthful ideal of resolution, strength and wisdom.

They had hired the *Astrea* at Manila, and had arranged that the value of the shell should be divided equally, but that each should take in turn the entire catch of pearls on alternate days. And the luck had all been with Armstrong. His share was thrice that of his partner, and his luck seemed holding to the last, for this last day was his.

The afternoon sun blazed down on the motionless deck, on the oily sea, and on the plumed foliage of the atoll. In the distance rose the blue hills of Mindanao, where the khaki-clad volunteers

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were clearing the bolomen from the jungles. Through the smoke of his cheroot Hastings gazed vaguely across the sea, and he was disgusted with his luck. He would scarcely cover his share of the expenses of the expedition, he thought dismally, when he heard a suppressed, half-choked exclamation from Armstrong, and turned to look.

A gigantic, knobby shell which the boy had just opened lay beside him on the deck, and in his hand he was holding a small, pear-shaped object of a pale, but indescribably rich rose-color, that glistened softly in the sunlight. It was almost exactly the shape and size of a robin's egg.

It was by far the largest pearl they had found, and its peculiar color would greatly increase its value. Hastings estimated that it would bring three or four thousand dollars at least, and it had come just in time to fill Armstrong's luck to overflowing. But the boy was so transported with admiration and delight that Hastings could not, after all, envy him his fortune.

He examined the beautiful pearl with scarcely less admiration than its owner displayed, and then his eye fell upon the shell from which it had been taken. It lay on the planking, half open, full of the living oyster. Hastings looked at it sharply, picked it up and scrutinized its ridged surface with care, and then dropped it again, and his face hardened. As he threw the shell down, the great pearl escaped from his fingers and dropped over the schooner's side.

Armstrong bounded up with an agonized yell, and every one rushed to the rail. But the pearl had not gone to the bottom. One of the boats was lying alongside, and the jewel had fallen into it and lay shining softly in three inches of bilge water. A diver climbed down and brought it on board again. Armstrong pocketed it immediately.

"It's a miracle that it wasn't lost," he said angrily.

"I'm sorry," replied Hastings ambiguously, relighting his cheroot. Armstrong said no more. He had never quite freed himself from his boyish sense of his friend's vast superiority, and he suppressed his wrath and was silent.

They found no more pearls that day, and they sailed for Manila the next morning, with the schooner's hold full of shell that had

been "rotted out" on the beach. The pearls were in a small steel safe in the cabin, of which they both knew the combination, but which was internally divided into two compartments locking with different keys. The contents of Armstrong's section were worth six or seven thousand dollars; Hastings had perhaps a third as much.

It was four or five days' run to Manila, and off Mindoro they ran into a bit of heavy weather. Their captain, an old Island Schooner-sailor, was entirely capable of navigating the *Astrea* through a much greater difficulty, but Armstrong's boyish enthusiasm caused him to remain on deck all night under the delusion that he was being of service. About three in the morning he went below to look at the barometer; he swayed into the cabin as the schooner plunged wildly, and then stopped short, clinging to the door, in utter astonishment.

Under the irregular light of the swinging lamp, Hastings was kneeling before the open safe, balancing himself easily as the floor heaved beneath him. In his hands he held several keys and a bit of bent wire, with which he was endeavoring to open, not his own compartment of the strong-box, but that of his partner. His back was toward the door, and in the crashing and rending tumult of the tempest he had not heard Armstrong's entrance.

The boy stood still in growing horror, his streaming oilskins making a pool about his feet. He began to feel the sensations of seasickness. He returned softly on deck, shouted down the companionway, and, after a discreet interval, returned to the cabin. He found the safe closed, and Hastings in his bunk, rubbing his eyes as if just awakened.

Armstrong could not comprehend it at all. It was impossible to conceive that Hastings should descend to larceny from a friend — but he had the evidence of his eyes. He would have given the pink pearl that it should have never happened. He shrunk from the idea of suspicion, but he doubted. And from that night he wore the best of his pearls in a buckskin sack under his shirt, and in the act he felt guilty of a disloyalty to his friend.

Imperceptibly and involuntarily a constraint grew between the two men. Hastings was silent and grave, and Armstrong was silent and embarrassed, almost as if he had himself been detected

in a theft. Each seemed conscious of something of which neither dared to speak.

From Manila they took the first mail steamer for San Francisco, and Armstrong deposited his pearls in a sealed packet in charge of the purser. During the voyage the partners avoided one another almost instinctively. They were unnaturally cordial when they met in their common stateroom, but they smoked upon different quarters of the deck, and they were both glad when the strained situation ended at the Golden Gate.

Hastings sold his pearls for $2,500, which was more than he had expected. But the thought of the great pink pearl clung to him like an obsession. He had not seen Armstrong since landing, and he did not know what had become of the pearl, but he felt sure that it must still be in the city, and one morning he discovered its whereabouts unexpectedly.

A knot of people were gathered before the window of a jewelry shop on Montgomery Street, and Hastings glanced in as he passed. There, upon a cushion of black velvet, shone a splendid necklace of perfect white pearls, with a single enormous pink pearl as the pendant. Hastings recognized it instantly; there could be no other like it in San Francisco, and he went into the shop, introducing himself as a pearl dealer, to make certain inquiries.

The necklace, he was informed, had been made for Mrs. Leonard Peck; three old necklaces had been taken to pieces to supply the materials, but the pendant was absolutely new and had never been worn. The jeweler added that Mrs. Peck particularly desired that it be finished and delivered in time for her reception on the evening of the fourteenth, at which the Ambassador of Belgium, who was making a tour of the West, was to be present.

Hastings had known Mrs. Leonard Peck slightly in the past. She was a plump, amiable, foolish, blonde widow of thirty-five, immensely rich from the departed Peck's Idaho mines, and inordinately fond of showy jewelry, of sweet Mexican preserves, and of filling her house to suffocation with people she scarcely knew when some visiting celebrity could be procured as the central attraction. In this reception to the Belgian Ambassador, Hastings recognized this last passion, which had evidently not decayed with years.

That day was the thirteenth; he had discovered the pearl none too soon. He spent the rest of the day in promenading the streets, a prey to indecision, doubt and alarm. Several times he passed the jeweler's window, where the necklace still blazed, but when he went to look at it next morning it was gone. It had been delivered to its purchaser.

Hastings spent that day in the same mental perturbation as the previous one, only raised to a higher pitch. Something would have to be done immediately; he had delayed already too long; and that evening he got into his dress suit, ordered a cab, and was driven to Mrs. Peck's redwood mansion on Knob Hill.

As he had expected, the guests were arriving in crowds. Mrs. Peck was receiving, very décolletée, with a marvelous coiffure, and round her white neck softly glowed the new necklace with the great pink pendant reposing like a gout of palest blood on her satiny bosom. She obviously did not remember Hastings; she saw a presentable young man in evening dress, whose name she could not recollect, and she gave him a soft, welcoming hand, murmured an affectionate "So glad to see you!" and turned her attention to the next comer.

Hastings knew scarcely any one in the crowded rooms. Presently, to his surprise, he encountered Armstrong, and they chatted a few minutes; then Hastings moved on, prowling about the groups, trying to conceal his perturbation, and wondering what he should do. Mrs. Peck had her eye upon him, however, and after vainly trying to recollect his face, conceived the idea that he was a Secret Service detective appointed to watch over the Ambassador. She had a notion that Secret Service men were an indispensable part of a diplomat's state.

She was in a state of intense felicity at the admiration and envy which were being aroused by her pearls, particularly by the pendant. The Ambassador had said that he never saw anything like it, and had turned the phrase to a personal compliment, with Parisian dexterity, and Mrs. Peck's soft and gelatinous soul was suffused with warm pleasure. This approached her ideal of happiness.

Hastings approached her as she fanned herself, surrounded by an admiring group. She was supporting the pink pearl in her hand, and it seemed to Hastings that it glowed with a deeper red.

"Do you know, it almost frightens me," she was saying, with a little laugh. "It actually seems to be growing hot; it burns me. Of course it's only my imagination — "

The sentence ended in a little shriek. Hastings had pushed brusquely through the group, seized the pendant without a word and snapped it from its gold clasps. Mrs. Peck screamed again; there was a rush to her assistance, but in the first moment of non-comprehension Hastings had almost gained the door.

"Stop him!" a dozen men were shouting. Before he could reach the exit he was seized. He struggled to free himself, but more and more men hurried up, and he was held fast. By a supreme effort he managed to release his right arm for a moment, and endeavored to fling the pearl through the window, but almost at the moment it left his hand it exploded with a blinding flash and a report that shook the building.

His captors staggered back, half stunned. The room was filled with an acrid odor of strange gas, but no smoke. The shock had broken the nearest window, but no one appeared to have been seriously hurt, except Hastings, who was lying bleeding and insensible on the carpet.

There was a scramble among the guests to escape. It was supposed that an Anarchist attempt was under way. There was screaming and some swearing. The policeman patrolling the sidewalk outside rushed in and delivered orders with heavy dignity. The patrol wagon was called; the ambulance was telephoned for; some one rang in a fire alarm. Mrs. Peck sat in an easy chair in the absolute collapse of horror. The Ambassador thought of the letter he would write home on the terrible social customs of these Westerners.

They carried Hastings into one of the bedrooms, and attempted to revive him, not quite certain whether he were a hero or a miscreant. His neck and his right arm were badly lacerated, but by some miracle he seemed to have escaped any deadly injury, and after a few minutes he came to himself.

As his eyes opened, his glance fell vaguely upon Mrs. Peck at the foot of the bed. She had revived from her collapse into a state of daze and bewilderment. Armstrong was standing by the pillow, wearing an appearance of anxious non-comprehension,—

an expression, in fact, which was common to every face in the room.

Hastings smiled weakly, and seemed to try to pull himself together.

"Now do you understand?" he said a little faintly to his old friend. "This is what I was trying to save you from."

"That's all right. You mustn't talk just now," said Armstrong, soothingly.

"No, but I want to tell you. These people ought to hear it too. Give me a drink."

He was given a little weak brandy and water, with the repeated recommendation to be silent.

"I knew you saw me in the cabin that night," he continued, swallowing the drink and rejecting the advice. "I couldn't tell you about it then. It was too incredible.

"You know I was there before, in 1895, in that lagoon. Casaras was the governor of Mindanao then, and he was a pearl pirate. He blackmailed me for six months, and then robbed me with a gun-boat — cleaned me out. He said I was a filibuster. I had to leave, but I fixed up things to get even with him. I never told you that part. I wasn't particularly proud of it."

He paused and took another drink. His voice grew stronger.

"You remember manganite, that new explosive that came out about that time? They were going to use it for torpedo loads, but it turned out that it was no good. It was about ten times as powerful as dynamite, but it would explode only under a long-continued and very gentle warmth. Well, I got a little of it and made it into a ball, and covered it with red wax. I went back to my lagoon and found that Casaras had a pearling schooner there already, so I had to do the business at night. I fished up the biggest oyster I could find, opened it and put the lump of wax inside. You know the Chinese make pearls that way. Then I sunk it again. I reckoned that it would be a pearl in six months.

"I knew Casaras would never sell such a pearl as that would be. He would wear it, or give it to his wife, and the mere warmth of the body would be enough to explode it in an evening. Oh, it was a devilish thing to do, a dastardly thing, but I was crazy. I'd been robbed of all I had.

"I never heard of the thing again till we fished it up. I recognized the shell by a funny, half-moon shaped mark on it, and I didn't know what to do. I didn't dare tell my yarn; it sounded too utterly mad — and I didn't care to show myself such a brute, any way. I came near delaying too long. In another minute Mrs. Peck would have lost her pearl and her life at once. Now do you see why I wanted to steal your pearl?" he added, glancing up at Armstrong, and holding out his uninjured left hand, which the boy grasped without a word.

Mrs. Peck did not know what to say. She was vaguely conscious that her life had been saved by this young man, who had told the disagreeable story of dynamite and revenge, but she was shocked at the whole atmosphere of the thing. She had never been exposed to anything of the sort before. And she had been robbed, besides, and she murmured plaintively,

"And it was such a beautiful pearl!"

With McGann in the Equation.*

BY RICHARD BARKER SHELTON.

AT the first glimpse, Nye's Crossing is not prepossessing. A train from the south bowls along through miles of unbroken pine woods and alder swamps; then suddenly the woods give place to bare, low hills, productive, seemingly, of a fine crop of rocks. The cars swing a sharp curve, and if the station-agent has a green flag out, the locomotive gives a couple of hoarse toots by way of recognition; there is a grinding of brakes, two or three head-yanking jolts, and the train comes to a standstill before a little roofed box painted green and yellow.

Across the tracks from the station are great stretches of evil-smelling marshes, with here and there a stagnant pool catching the glint of the sun. Some rods back of the green and yellow box, a low hill shuts off the view to the west. Over the hill is Nye's Crossing. From the station platform there is very little to see. Three angular poplar trees are about the only distinctive marks on the landscape. Occasionally, the Widow Brayton's cow comes foraging over the hill and browses about the station yard. These visits, however, are somewhat uncertain, and since it is only when provender along the road is particularly bad that she ventures into the yard, the cow cannot be considered a permanent attraction.

One day in May, the 2.30 from the south came up to the flaring little box with a prodigious squealing of brakes. The station-agent had no green flag set, and such a procedure on the part of the 2.30 could mean nothing else than that she would drop a passenger. This was an event, and the station-agent went out to witness it. When the train stopped, there alighted a tall, well-dressed man in a frock coat and a shiny top-hat. Then, as if greatly elated over her feat, the 2.30 went puffing up the grade.

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The station-agent surveyed the arrival from top to toe. He was thinking, "This is no man for this place." The arrival in like manner surveyed the station-agent. He was thinking, "Where in creation am I now?" The arrival advanced a few paces.

"How are you?" he said cordially. The station-agent perfunctorily repeated the question.

"Where's the town?" the man inquired. The agent waved his arm towards the hill. The man took a comprehensive view of the landscape to the west. It was a hot day; the three poplars stood stiff and straight; not a breath of air rustled their leaves. Forage over the hill being of an inferior quality just then, Mrs. Brayton's cow nibbled about the yard.

"What's the main occupation here?" the man questioned.

"Sleepin'," replied the agent, with a grin.

"Any manufactures?" the man asked.

The agent grinned again. "Lies and cider," said he.

"Likely looking cow," the man observed, with a view to further sociability. The agent said he'd heard she was a good milker, and then, with a nodded good-day, the man picked up his satchel and made for the hill. Widow Brayton's cow raised her head and made a critical inspection of the stranger as he passed. The top-hat and glistening shoes were new to her experience. She expressed her surprise and doubt in a long-drawn "moo-oo-o" and went back to her grazing.

The stranger followed the dusty wagon-road over the hill. At the crest he paused and took his first view of the town proper. If the outlook pleased him, he had lost all control of facial expression. The single expletive which escaped his lips was half curse, and half disgusted grunt. He put down his satchel and seated himself on the wall for a mental view of the situation.

At present, he dared venture no farther north. As to the south, his exit from thence had been by such a narrow margin that it gave him tremors to think of it. To the south were several gentlemen who greatly desired his society. To the north were more gentlemen with similar desires. The only place at present where he could be absolutely sure of immunity from disagreeable company was this God-forsaken town of Nye's Crossing just before him. Sooner or later he knew he must take the northward route.

It was because his desires led him in this direction that he had taken the contents of the satchel. It was because he had taken the contents of the satchel that the gentlemen to the north and the gentlemen to the south were desirous of his company. If he could but slip through the cordons, and take the northward journey, he was sure of a happiness so great, that, in its later light, these little embarrassments would seem but trifling adventures. He was assured of this, partly by the contents of the satchel; partly by a conscience which pliably adapted itself to circumstances; partly by the fact that those who knew not, were none the wiser. At the end of the northern journey was a woman.

But to go northward at present would be the height of folly. For a certain worthy gentleman, who rejoiced in the not over-euphonic name of "Scotty" McGann was, he knew, in the very next city to the north, momentarily awaiting his arrival. With McGann in the equation, a journey in that direction would be very much like walking into a pit. With McGann bottled somewhere — ah! that was it! It was McGann alone he feared. He would risk it on even terms with any of the other gentlemen.

He sat for some time on the wall, the top-hat tilted far back on his head, and the heels of his patent-leather shoes kicking a lively and reckless tattoo on the stones beneath him. "With McGann bottled somewhere — With McGann bottled somewhere," kept running through his head. Suddenly he gasped, sat erect and then sprang from the wall. The very audacity of the thing brought great beads of perspiration to his forehead. But his jaws shut tight, a steely light came into the gray eyes, and hard lines of determination appeared about the mouth. Yet, as he picked up the satchel and started down the road, he hummed gaily.

When he reached the village, he stepped into the general store to inquire the way to the hotel. The proprietor of the store was a sleepy-looking individual with long white whiskers, whose yellow stains gave evidence of much tobacco. As to the hotel, the proprietor said he'd "never heard tell of any," but he thought the stranger might find accommodation at the Pearsons'; whereupon he launched into minute details concerning right-hand roads and left-hand roads and thirty rods past a clump of firs, to all of which the other listened quietly.

"Seems to be a slow town," the newcomer remarked, when he had made sure of the route to the Pearsons'. The proprietor admitted it was "deader'n Moses."

"Not much of a place for a man with a price on his head to come to, eh?" the stranger pursued. The proprietor did not seem to think it was.

"Well," the other continued, "there's one headed this way. Be here probably before the week's out. That's why I'm here. It'll liven things up no doubt when he arrives."

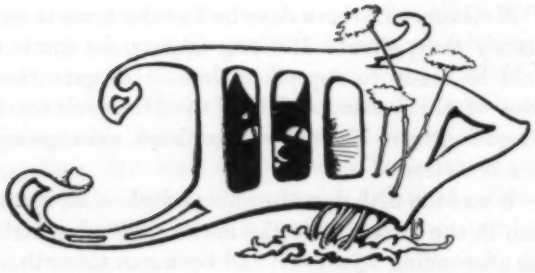
That was enough for a starter. The stranger took his way to the Pearsons', and the storekeeper stood staring after him with bulging eyes. In a few days, bit by bit, the newcomer let the story out. He was, he said, a secret-service agent after a noted counterfeiter, one "Scotty" McGann, who, he had every reason to believe, was headed for Nye's Crossing. He also explained that a secret-service agent, however vigilant, could not have his eyes everywhere at once, and lest his man should slip through his fingers, he swore in as many men as possible to serve as deputies, and offered a reward of $100 to anyone who should arrest this "Scotty" McGann. In three days he had the town in such a fever of expectancy that, should McGann appear, he knew the whole town would be ready to apprehend him. He gave them minute descriptions of their man, and told them how clever he was in turning suspicion from himself — sometimes, even, going so far as to pose as a detective.

Then — it was the fifth day after his arrival — he sent a despatch to McGann in the next city to the north. The despatch said that Blake, the absconding treasurer, had been run to earth, and would be at Nye's Crossing next day, it had been learned on good authority. The despatch was signed with the name of one of the gentlemen to the south. The rest of the day he spent in dropping hints about town.

Mrs. Brayton's cow grazed peacefully about the station yard next day, when the 1.59 from the north pulled in. A thickset man with clean-shaven face and a square jaw alighted and came briskly down the board walk. At the foot of the hill he was stopped by three men. For some time they talked, and the clean-shaven man seemed trying to explain something. The others

shook their heads. The clean-shaven man began to gesticulate rapidly. The three laid their hands on him and he showed fight. It was over in a moment. The three had him down, and he was dragged, protesting loudly, over the hill.

A half-hour later, the 2.30 from the south pulled up in response to the agent's green flag, and the gentleman with the top-hat and glistening shoes boarded it. He sought a quiet corner of the smoker and tried to conjure up visions of the face of the woman to the north. But another face persistently thrust itself into his dreams — a face dirty and bloody and black with wrath. It was the face of "Scotty" McGann as he stood before the "deputies" in the store at Nye's Crossing.



The Passing of the Gooba.*

BY MRS. WILLIS LORD MOORE.

AS Mrs. Jonathan Dusk idled at the breakfast table reading her mail, her eyes opened with surprise as she came to an odd-shaped envelope addressed in a quaint and characteristic chirography. Her surprise increased as she turned it over, noting the strange foreign paper, and culminated in a mingling of emotions when she had read the following communication, which it contained: —

Would the Disciple learn to save the Soul without self-sacrifice; become cultured without study; attain power over things material?

For Light upon the Path, knock at the Door of number 777, Seventh Avenue, where thy steps shall be directed, by the Outer Keeper, toward the Way leading to the Temple of the Charmacarin Gooba.

Calling her maid, Mrs. Dusk asked if this letter had been received with the other mail.

"No, Ma'am, it came after."

"Who brought it?"

The maid did not know.

"Was it given to you at the door?"

"W'y Ma'am, I can't seem to recollect, — I know I brought it and put it beside yer plate, Ma'am, but I can't seem to say how I came by it," the girl answered confusedly, putting her hand to her head.

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A few minutes later, Mrs. Dusk was on her way to communicate the strange occurrence to her friend, Mrs. Swift. She met her friend halfway, and each observed that the other held in her hand an odd-shaped envelope.

"You have one also?" they gasped simultaneously.

"I wonder if they are alike," observed Mrs. Dusk, withdrawing her missive from the envelope. Mrs. Swift did likewise. Each gazed upon a blank page! In vain they sought for a line upon the strange, foreign-looking paper. Each related the manner of receiving the mysterious communication. They had been, undoubtedly, identical in purport, and delivered in a like manner, whatever that manner may have been.

Nor were they the only ones to receive this eerie summons. Astonishment, curiosity, eager anticipation dwelt in many a breast in the little city of Gnawsig upon that memorable morning.

Some time previous, a Hindoo had appeared in that community, and addressing himself to Mrs. Jonathan Dusk, the unchallenged leader of Gnawsig society, had so infected her with his philosophy that she had opened her glittering mansion for an "afternoon," when the Esoteric theories of the Oriental were propounded to a select hundred or so of the "very creamest cream," as Mrs. Dusk confidentially imparted in her verbal invitations. Gnawsig society thus imbibed a number of Hindoo words, together with a nebulous idea that there existed a sort of transcendent religion which had not been incorporated into the creeds of any of its churches, but which was not only "quite the go" in other parts of the world, but, on other grounds, a highly desirable possession. It also gathered that there were forces more subtle and powerful than those generated in its own costly electric works; and so instinctively commercial was the Gnawsig mind that Mrs. Deering approached the Hindoo with a proposition to erect a plant to corner the new commodity in that locality, assuring him that "whatever Deering undertook was sure to go, as he had a bigger bank account than anybody."

"Karma," "Incarnation," and "Aura" became part of the common vocabulary of Gnawsig society, and the Browning Club united with the "Broad A" Cult, in universal brotherhood for the purpose of "Concentration." They met at twilight, took

deep breaths, and "Went into the Silence," gazing meantime, with one accord, at Mrs. Dusk's thousand-dollar chandelier, the cut-glass pendants of which emitted a faint dazzle in the reflected light from a street lamp. As all were upon a scant diet, and the meetings were before dinner (or rather supper), they were able to describe to each other after "coming out," the peculiar sensations of giddiness and detachment experienced during "Concentration." They were informed by the Brother, before his departure, that each would receive, from time to time, in some occult way, instructions as she attained to fitness and required them. And so each was, presumably, ever on the alert for an opening which would admit her to a region above the heads of her fellows; and when the mysterious communication came, each believed herself to be exclusively called at last. In the meantime, each dutiful wife had bent her energies toward the instruction of her benighted spouse, who had listened with indifference or a sniff, but with diplomatic acquiescence.

Thus the strange missive had been addressed to men as well as women, and within a week, The Temple of the Gooba became the meeting-place of much of the "solid" element of Gnawsig. It would have been apparent, to a thoughtful observer, that a sifting process must have occurred at the door of No. 777 Seventh avenue, for the Temple seemed somehow to have been attained by only the wealthy and influential citizens of the place. This was not surprising to those who participated — for the dollar sign had ever been the sign of fitness among them. So ingenuously sordid was the little city, that its élite had not even suspected irony when a lady from abroad recommended a newcomer to their consideration, saying, "I'm sure you will like Mrs. Waters; her husband is rated A-1 in Bradstreets."

Wonderful things occurred in the Temple. Any but the most sane might have doubted the evidence of their senses; but Gnawsig — and by Gnawsig I mean, of course, her weighty citizens — was accustomed to test all things by the rule of common sense — or rather, common dollars and cents. Nothing was accepted upon faith; and the intensely practical miracles of the new cult placed it beyond scepticism.

"Deering always says," remarked the wife of the financial leader,

"that he don't take no stock in things that ain't practical; but when he seen the Charmacarin turn that dollar bill into a twenty, the thing never leavin' his own hand — when he seen that, he says, 'That gits me!' and he's ben one of the faithful ever sence."

Rumors of some of the wonders worked in the Temple became noised abroad. It was said that forms materialized — not in the vulgar manner employed by spirit mediums — no; but Great Masters, lying wrapped in the Thought of Ages, in caves in India, projected their Astral bodies before the Disciples, in order to impart Occult Truth. The uninitiated sneered at these reports, dubbing the cult "The Oligarchy of Idiocy"; and when it was understood that Mrs. Deering was a High Priestess of the Order, there were those among the merely intellectual outsiders who suggested that, while miracles were being performed, the lady's English should be reduced to its original elements, and re-incarnated upon a higher plane.

Swathed from head to foot in spotless linen, the Charmacarin Gooba preached a welcome gospel to the society of Gnawsig. Truth came not from books. Gnawsig hated books; but the era of Woman's Club culture made it necessary to seem to have read; hence the success of Miss James' morning talks on literature. She so condensed and simplified the literary news of the day that, by sitting for an hour a week under the droppings from her brain, one could converse upon literary topics quite as intelligently as though one had gone to the personal inconvenience of reading.

The church doctrine of self-sacrifice was quite reversed by the Gooba. One must conserve all one's forces, protect oneself from the unpleasant emanations of others, and gaze steadfastly within. "Not by works, by charities, or philanthropies, would the world be saved, but by the concentrated meditation of the Masters." The senior Dusk, who, in a fit of compunction over a questionable stock deal, had endowed a hospital, sincerely regretted his rashness. Meditation was so much cheaper than philanthropy that it appealed directly to the Gnawsig mind.

"Gooba," they were told by the Outer Keeper, "was a name so transcendental as to be untranslatable into our cumbrous language. "It indicated, in fact," he said, "the rank of their teacher among the masters on the Other Side;" while "Charmacarin,"

he explained, "proclaimed to those wise in such lore, his Degree among the leaders of the Order in India."

All this was most fascinating; and the name of their circle, which the Gooba said had been communicated to him from the Other Side, gave them a feeling of exaltation and exclusiveness which no church had ever conferred. "'Yenom Frater' has such a foreign, distinguished sound!" exclaimed Mrs. Swift. When Mr. Deering discovered that, spelled backward, it gave the common word "money," the Gooba looked shocked, and Mr. Steele, the humorist, averred that Deering was bound to make money anywhere.

The symbol of the Circle was SII. This was never to be pronounced above the breath; in fact, the Gooba said, it was so Occult as to be superior to formulation in the human thought, but was given them in Astral projection from another plane. Mrs. Deering had it made into a diamond brooch, and was reprimanded for vainglorioussness, but was forgiven when the Gooba chanced to observe that the diamond was her Astral Gem.

The Temple meetings were delightful affairs, pervaded by an atmosphere of well-fed, well-clad, well-groomed self-satisfaction. They took the place of Church to Gnawsig society, and, as Mrs. Lush remarked, "It was so much nicer than church, for you never knew just who you might meet, even in the best of churches." The Temple consisted of a large room upstairs in a down-town block. Its walls were hung with Oriental stuffs, its floors covered with rugs, and the air was heavy with incense. A screened doorway led to the Inner Court, where none save the Gooba and the Outer Keeper ever penetrated. Within two weeks after its initial meeting, the Yenom Frater had plans drawn for an edifice befitting so august a circle, for its members believed in the revised maxim, "handsome is that handsome looks."

When, one evening, to illustrate the working of Occult forces in the transmutation of materials, the Gooba had performed the miracle with the one-dollar bill, the Yenom Frater made low obeisance to the powers of their Master.

Mr. Deering was asked to take from his pocket a dollar bill. This he placed upon a saucer in his own hand. The Gooba then explained that there were certain rites necessary to the focusing

of forces, and that these rites must be performed by himself alone within the Inner Court. They were, as yet, insufficiently advanced to follow him thither; but they could assist him by chanting, as he withdrew to the Inner Court, the ancient Egyptian hymn which he had taught them. And so, bearing the dollar bill upon the saucer, he with measured tread receded to the Inner Court, while the Yenom Frater, with bowed heads, chanted the invocation which was to assist in reducing the material in hand to its Astral elements, whence the Master would materialize it in changed form. There was a brief interval of silence, following the chant; then the Gooba returned, and fixing his gaze upon Mr. Deering's eyes, he remarked, as he handed him the saucer, "You observe, my brother, the one dollar note, as yet unaltered." A pang of disappointment sought expression in Mr. Deering's face; but the Gooba was muttering Hindoo words, and adorning the air with mystic symbols made by the middle finger of the left hand. Glancing quickly at the saucer, Mr. Deering saw the bill, reposing exactly as he had placed it, with one corner slightly curled up, and one side curved under — but — it was a twenty-dollar bill!

The financier's first idea was to take advantage of the Gooba's apparent ignorance of the profitable stage to which the miracle had progressed, and to pocket his greatly improved property without comment; but the broad principle of finance presently triumphed over the narrow impulse of avarice, and his hand was stayed from so unwise an act. This was an industry, not an incident; the future was richer than the present. He had made money rapidly many times, but this was a record breaker! His mind instinctively entered upon a computation of the financial result, could he but incorporate the Gooba and thus control his exclusive services. But the Master meanwhile was preaching, "Not that I would advise the transmutation of money. It is but an emblem by which I would illustrate. Thus, by material things, would I symbolize the transmutation of the faculties of the body and brain into those of the spirit."

But the Yenom Frater, still chained to the concrete, desired to be convinced again and again, by the transmutation of cash into more cash. Here was something which they could fully grasp. It was all right to talk about enlarging and clarifying one's Aura by

means of certain foods and practices, and of course each desired to have as large and as beautiful an Aura as his neighbor, if not more so; but, after all, no one but Adepts could see one's Aura, and it seemed rather useless, not to say selfish, to acquire anything so intangible. But more money — why that was obvious, and just what every one wanted!

In vain the Gooba preached, with sorrowful mien, against sordid desires. Each evening ended with a request from some one that he transmute just once more a small bill into a large one, even a large bill into one of higher denomination.

The Gooba seemed oblivious of the fact that he must be, by his transmutations, defraying most of the expenses of the society, but he continued to strive to concentrate their thoughts upon the transformation of the spirit. But when, finally, Mr. Deering approached him with a proposition for individual instruction, in order that he might carry on a transmutation business of his own, the Gooba was in a rage.

"My friends," he said at last, "it is with deep grief — yes chagrin — that I note always your sordid thought. I had hoped by my word and by my influence to change this, but I make slow progress. It is money, money! always money! This is the stone wall in your minds from which all my teachings rebound. I have been discourage. I have enter the Inner Court in deep Concentration. I have achieve a plan. Sometime the body have appetite which cannot be appease until satiety. I have decide — or better to say — I am guide, to give to you satiety of this money transmutation. Then, perhap, your great desire will be allay, and I can progress more in the true transmutation, which is the great objec' of the soul-life; the transmutation of the mind-thought, and the body-force, into the spirit."

Eagerly they grasped his plan. They were to bring to the next meeting any amount of money, and the Gooba would transmute it as they might wish. All the money they desired, for the mere breath it cost to name it! It practically amounted to that, as Mr. Deering pointed out, on the way home. The only limit was that of the imagination. Stop! There was a condition. Yes. They had forgotten in their excitement. The Gooba had said that, owing to the strain upon his forces, he would but triple the

sums brought; a subtle facility being lent by the mystic number three.

"Well, to go home with three times the amount we take, that's a fair evening's earnings," Mr. Deering remarked; and he mentally congratulated himself upon his prudence in always keeping a large amount of available cash for immediate investment.

During the next twenty-four hours, the moneyed citizens of Gnawsig were busy. Every dollar that could be withdrawn from the banks was called out. Fortunately, many were officers in banks and could summon money from many sources. Notes were discounted, loans cancelled at a loss and, in short, every available means of getting cash was employed. It was learned, afterward, that Mr. Deering borrowed upon all sides at fabulous interest. Rumor said that he did not disdain sums as small as one dollar.

I would not dare to name the amount brought by the Yenom Frater to the Temple on the eventful night. The Gooba gazed upon its bulk as one who beheld, laid bare, the frailty of the human race, and found the sight too sad for tears, too disgusting for anger, too humiliating for speech. He covered his face with his hands for a moment, then withdrawing them, as though he swept a cloud from before his vision, he ordered the Outer Keeper to remove the money to the Inner Court.

In a voice hoarse, as with despair, he said:

"So vast are the sums brought here to-night, that I shall ask each member"—he did not call them "brothers" when displeased—"to write upon a slip of paper the amount which he has brought. This will act as a receipt, and will help him to claim the proper share after transmutation has taken place."

This done, the Gooba stood before them in silence, his dark, inscrutable eyes fixed upon them. He essayed to speak, but sorrow seemed to close his lips, and it is possible that even the most sordid among them felt a momentary compunction over his persistent disregard of this Saint's admonitions. Mrs. Dusk said, afterward, that she then and there resolved to place her three-fold fortune in some safe investment, the next day, and never give it another thought.

Perhaps the Gooba, with his wondrous power, read these hopeful signs in the thoughts of his disciples, for he summoned strength to

request them to begin the familiar chant with which they had often assisted him in the work of transmutation.

"Much concentration, long thought for me to-night, my friends. It may take several hour. Repeat the invocation from the Nile — repeat it at interval of forty-nine minute, — the seven time seven interval. I need all your help. You — my friends" — his voice quavered and broke — "have impose upon your master a heavy task to-night — heavy to the spirit." He ceased, with an indrawn breath resembling a sob.

The Yenom Frater bowed its heads, almost in shame, but its eyes watched furtively the slowly receding form, as the familiar hymn was chanted forth,

"From the icy bonds of matter
Set us free;
Let our thoughts for aye and ever
Follow thee.
From our gross material senses
Thou dost flee."

As the last notes of the invocation lapsed into silence, the Charmacarin Gooba was passing from the sight of his disciples forever.

A Pair of Paper Aunts.*

BY F. WENDT.

MRS. WICKHAM and her niece, Miss Amabel Burton — had been in London four weeks, enjoying to the full the pleasures of the gay metropolis. The delightful European outing had come to an end, and the morrow was to find aunt and niece homeward bound on the ship sailing for New York.

The printed steamer-list contained their names, the tickets were safely stowed away in their satchels, and their departure seemed humanly certain, when Mrs. Wickham received a telegram relating to family matters, making it absolutely impossible for her to leave.

Another week in London would not, under ordinary circumstances, have seemed a hardship to her niece. But the circumstances were not ordinary. The date of departure had been timed accurately to a date, on which Miss Amabel was to officiate as Maid-of-Honor at the wedding of one of her best friends, in New York. It was therefore absolutely necessary that she should leave.

But how? Alone? Without her aunt — without a chaperon? Preposterous idea, to Miss Amabel!

Chaperoned, watched and leading-stringed with infinite care, during the eighteen years of her life, Miss Amabel had unfortunately been left free to choose her own novels, and had managed, from a more than unwise selection to draw the conclusion that the genus "man" is a dangerous creation, only kept in check by the time-worn institution of the chaperon.

Any gardener will tell you that, no matter how frail a plant may be, there comes a period in its life when it is best to pull out the stick to which the tender stalk has been carefully tied by soft

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woollen strings, and allow the plant to test the strength of its own roots.

In Mrs. Wickham's estimation, Amabel had all she needed of stick-tied existence, and would be the better for a week of self-dependence.

And so it happened that, the next day, after hours of reasoning pro and con, Miss Amabel found herself on the steamer, chaperoned only by her aunt — on the steamer-list. No man would dare take liberties with a maiden, whose aunt — although ill in her stateroom — was guarding her.

The only question now was, how to disable the aunt *permanently* during the trip without arousing suspicion.

Miss Amabel's plans were beautifully and deeply laid. If the trip should prove rough, the aunt's absence from deck and meals could be easily explained by sea-sickness; but if calm, she would have to suffer from — a sprained ankle. If rainy, rheumatism would naturally confine her to her stateroom; and if the sun shone — but why borrow trouble? Pretty Miss Amabel was quite able to cope with circumstances as they might present themselves.

It has been stated for ages, on good authority, that the ways of the liar are hard. The world is so constituted that, allow yourself to get off the straight and narrow path for ever so little, it will rush you gleefully to perdition.

So Miss Amabel sat on deck in a steamer-chair, beside another steamer-chair fully equipped with cushions and rugs, and labeled in very prominent lettering, "Mrs. Burton Wickham," just as if the Mrs. Wickham, to whom the chair evidently belonged, were aboard, and might, at any moment, step forth from the cabin to claim it.

Mrs. Wickham, for reasons before stated at length, could not step from the cabin — but a young man, at this moment, did. Following him, came a steward carrying a deck-chair and rug.

"Up there seems a good place," said the young man.

"Blowing awful hard there, sir," answered the steward.

"Couldn't blow hard enough to suit me."

As if to contradict his words, his steamer-rug blew away, and went sailing down the deck before the wind.

Finding Miss Amabel in its path, it was forced to stop, but, in revenge, curled itself around that young lady, completely enveloping her in its folds.

"Hello!" exclaimed the young man, "I believe I had better go and see whom my steamer-rug has slain — and apologize."

And it needed apologies.

It was only a distance of forty feet from the spot where the shawl started on its mad career to the place where Miss Amabel was trying to keep her eyes on the book she held; but in those forty feet the shawl acquired a marvelous speed. Before Miss Amabel knew what was happening, she was wrapped in Egyptian darkness, wildly struggling to free herself from a warm and fluttering embrace.

Now, if one unfortunately drops an opera-glass from the top-gallery of a theatre upon an assembled multitude in the orchestra seats fifty feet below, no one of ordinary intellect will go down and claim the opera-glass. So likewise it might have been wiser for our young man to stride quickly to the other side of the vessel and forever after deny his ownership of the offending article.

Harry Reynolds' character was, however, made up four-fifths chivalry and one-fifth precaution, and so, instead of beating a retreat, he hurried to the young girl's assistance.

As he drew away the shawl, there came from beneath an exceedingly pretty head, hair wildly disheveled, and eyes sparkling with anger.

"I am so — sorry," he stammered, "but — but — by George — you — you *do* look so funny."

No speech ever made on land or sea was more ill-chosen and unfortunate.

Without a word she rose and flung the shawl from her. The shawl, once more freed from restraint, took a wild leap and joyfully vaulted the railing into the ocean.

"Oh, dear! What have I done!" she exclaimed.

"Nothing," he said, "but very properly condemned my shawl to death by drowning. Justice is always swift on the high seas, and your sentence, considering the offence, was a light one."

"I am so sorry," she said, watching the dark speck that was quickly disappearing on the tumbling waves.

"We have both said that, so now that the cause of all the trouble is drowned, shall we make up and be friends?" — he held out his hand.

"But I — I don't know you," she gasped.

"But *I* know *you*," he went on. "You are Miss Amabel Burton, travelling back to New York with your aunt, to be a Maid-of-Honor."

Amabel looked at him aghast.

"No, I am not a mind reader," he went on, calmly. "You see, I am coming home, to be an usher at the same wedding — Miss Leighton's."

"Really! and are you Harry — I mean Mr. Henry Reynolds?"

"Now *you* are mind-reading, Miss Burton."

"Mind-reading? Oh, no. Belle Leighton wrote me that one of her ushers might be coming home on this ship. And here we are only out five hours, and we have met. But — I am so sorry about that shawl, Mr. Reynolds."

"Well, as it is summer, I shall probably not freeze to death. But at the first chill I get in my rugless steamer chair, I shall come to you and claim one-half of your rug, and the whole of your Aunt's chair — of course, only at times when your Aunt is not on deck. I see she has not yet come up."

For a moment poor Amabel paused. Should she confess that she was travelling alone — without a chaperon? What would he think of her? No, no; her aunt must be below, ill — anything, only there, to protect her, in case of need.

"My aunt is — not quite well," she said.

Amabel had taken the fatal leap. The Fates would now do their share of the work.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Reynolds, "but I hope I may meet her tomorrow. Have you your seats at table yet?"

"No, I — we never thought of that."

"Awfully important feature of a trip, to get a good seat in the dining room; unless you are one of those unfortunates who are fed in a steamer-chair on deck on anything the deck-steward sees fit to bring them."

"I have never missed a meal aboard in my life," said Amabel proudly.

"Then will you let me try and get you and your aunt seats near the Captain?"

"Oh, — well, wouldn't it be better in — in a corner —— ?"

"There is the head-steward now," broke in Mr. Reynolds. "I will arrange it at once, that you, and your aunt and I will have a cozy corner, all to ourselves." He walked off, and Amabel sank back aghast.

"A cozy corner all to ourselves, you, your aunt, and I," she repeated to herself.

This Paper-Aunt delusion was becoming awkward, and creating unforeseen difficulties.

. . . . . .

Several days had passed, and Mr. Reynolds had, so far, taken his meals alone, in the "cozy corner of the dining-room" he had reserved for Miss Amabel and her aunt; while Miss Amabel, under plea of various excuses had, during meals, remained either on deck or in her stateroom "with her aunt."

"Now, you don't look a bit sea-sick," Mr. Reynolds said one evening, as she came up from dinner.

"Mr. Reynolds, how dare you say I am not sea-sick when *I* say I am, that I *will* be?"

"Oh, of course if it's a matter of choice — if ——"

"Of course it is not a matter of choice. How I wish my poor aunt could come up and tell you to — not to be so rude; but she has such a — sore throat that ——"

"How your aunt must have aged," Mr. Reynolds said, calmly; "formerly she was the healthiest woman I knew, and now — well, we have been aboard only a few days, and in that short space of time she has had — let me see — rheumatism, a sprained ankle, toothache, sea-sickness — headache, earache, sore throat and —"

But Amabel had risen majestically. "I *suppose* you think she is staying in her stateroom for fun," she said.

"I suppose nothing," answered Mr. Reynolds, "but for three days I have been carrying about a letter to be given to Mrs. Wickham personally. He drew a letter from his pocket. "It was given to me by *my* aunt just before I left, to give to *your* aunt. She was so particular about my delivering it in person, that there must be something very important in it."

"You may give it to me," said Miss Amabel, holding out her hand.

"But I was to give it personally to your aunt. May I go to her stateroom?"

"No, you may not. Give it to me. That is personal enough."

"If you are going right down?"

"I am," and she took the letter.

In the evening they met again.

"You have given the letter to your aunt?" asked Mr. Reynolds.

"I suppose you require a receipt?"

"No, but I should like an answer!"

"She has not read it yet," said Miss Amabel. A sentence of truth, it seemed like a draught of cool water to the parched conscience of the poor girl.

"My aunt told me to be sure and get an answer from your aunt," said Mr. Reynolds.

"Then I am afraid you will have to wait until my aunt has read it," she answered.

He bowed politely and walked off to the smoking-room.

Another predicament. If this letter were really so important, had she a right to read it? Right or wrong, there was but one thing to do, and so, a few minutes later, Miss Amabel was sitting on the narrow sofa in her stateroom studying the mysterious note:

MY DEAR CLOTILDE.

My nephew Harry will hand you this. Without wishing to worry you unnecessarily, I feel it my duty to tell you about a conversation I overheard in the Blakewood Hotel, in London, a day ago. I was dining in the restaurant, when I heard two men, hidden from my view by a screen, conversing excitedly and audibly.

One said "Yes, she is going with her aunt to-morrow. We must be careful. I know their trunks. I know the hold of the ship, too."

Then the men left without my being able to catch a glimpse of them. Now, I don't want to worry you, dear, but do be careful. Get my nephew to stay with you as much as possible, since you have no man to protect you; then I am sure those awful men, who, I am certain, are on your boat, will not dare to come near you and rob your trunks.

Kate sends love and says the twins are doing well.

Don't tell Amabel under any circumstances — you know why. And do not in any possible way let my nephew hear about it. He is hot-headed and would raise the most frightful commotion to discover the scoundrel. Wait and see. I may be making mountains out of molehills, but —*bon voyage*.

Your loving friend,

CORDELIA.

Amabel dropped the letter. So it had come to this. She was alone, and being hunted down for her jewels. "Wait and see," said the letter. What else could she do but wait and see, and — well, she would keep Mr. Reynolds a little more about her.

So it happened that Mr. Reynolds was invited to occupy the empty steamer-chair very frequently, and Miss Amabel discovered that his companionship was by no means undesirable.

At first he asked often about the reply to the letter he had delivered, but as Miss Amabel answered evasively, he did not press the question. He also gave up inquiring after Amabel's aunt, and made himself very agreeable.

"Of course, I only let him stay with me on account of those ruffians aboard, and because his aunt knows my aunt so well," she reasoned, when her conscience smote her, and accused her of the quickly developed friendship for a man who had been a perfect stranger only a few days before.

There followed cleverly managed trips to where her trunks were stowed away, and Mr. Reynolds seemed to enjoy these wanderings hugely. When asked in regard to the safety of property aboard ship, he related the most harrowing tales of theft, robbery, and even murder on the high seas, which had all happened to his personal friends.

Amabel in a short time became so dependent upon him, that she felt lonely when he happened to be away.

In the meanwhile, the propeller revolved, and the ship crept nearer and nearer to the port where steamer-friendships and steamer-comedies and tragedies are often dissolved in the land-rush, as though they had never been.

Amabel had kept the secret about her aunt bravely. But in a few hours they would land and then — why, then, Harry Reynolds would necessarily discover her deception.

And what would he say? Would he treat it as a joke, or would he resent it as an insult?

Strange, that Miss Amabel, who ordinarily cared so little what a man chose to think, should be so disturbed in regard to Mr. Harry Reynolds.

Land was in sight, and they were standing together at the railing, watching the shore as it grew more and more distinct.

"Mr. — Mr. Reynolds," finally began Amabel, after a long period of silence, "I — I have a confession to make."

"A confession, Miss Burton?"

She nodded. "Yes, I've been — I don't care about the others, but I do care what you think about me, and ——"

"Well, what grievous thing have you done?" he asked, smiling.

"I — I — have no aunt aboard," she looked at him penitently.

"When did she die?" he asked, without looking at her.

"She wasn't aboard at all," said Amabel bravely.

"Well, my case is worse," he answered calmly; "I never even had an aunt."

"What!" gasped Miss Amabel. "Then who wrote that letter you gave me for *my* aunt?"

"I did," said Mr. Reynolds.

"You, you dared to — to — deceive me — just to get to know me, because I never would have let you come near me if your aunt had not written my aunt."

"Yes, I know that. It was an awful plot on my part, but it succeeded beautifully. You see, at first, I was not quite sure about your aunt, although I did have my suspicions. And so ——"

"And so you wrote that letter to deceive me — to deceive me." She walked off and disappeared in the cabin.

"Now, if that isn't like a girl!" murmured Mr. Reynolds. "Never thinks of what *she* did to *me*." Then he went below to pack his trunk.

It is strange how results are determined by trifles. In this case the trifle was that, a day before, Amabel and Harry had exchanged key-bunches on one of their excursions to the trunk-room. Whether by accident or design is immaterial.

Why neither of them should have remembered the exchange

until, surrounded by trunks and custom-house officials on the pier, they both found themselves as helpless as turtle-doves to satisfy the demands of the law, is again a fact that psychology and not I should attempt to explain. Also how, only a short time later, the following conversation could have been possible between two persons who had so thoroughly disagreed in regard to Paper-Aunts.

— "I — I really can't give you an answer before I can ask my ——"

"Your Paper-Aunt?" laughed Harry — and then something happened that even a Pair of Paper-Aunts would have blushed at.

THERE are 40,000 members of the Commercial Travellers Accident Association, and each member carries an identification card, in case of injury.

On two pages of this card are printed "Medical and Surgical Helps" by Dr. Terry, Surgeon-in-Chief of the Association.

Paragraph 4 says—"FOR VERTIGO OR DIZZINESS—Please remember that Coffee often produces it; therefore when you have congestion of the head, skin is yellow, or you feel heavy about the heart—stop using Coffee."

Insurance Companies now refuse policies for "Coffee-heart" just as they do for Consumption, Apoplexy or Morphine habit.

Because, with most people, Coffee weakens the heart, inflames the Spinal Cord, and arrests the digestion of food, by partially petrifying it in the stomach as alcohol would in a specimen jar.

"Postum" while correcting "Coffee-heart," builds up Brain and Nerve tissue.

Because,—Postum is made from the outer coats of Wheat, which are rich in Phosphate of Potash, the readiest Brain and Nerve food that Nature has provided.

These outer coats, (being sifted from Flour in the milling,) cannot in daily Bread, make good the ravages of Coffee.

But when Postum is boiled for 15 minutes the Phosphates are extracted from the wheat fibres, just as soup is extracted from bone and meat, ready for prompt assimilation and Nerve support.

It is easy to switch from Coffee, because "Postum" has the delicious flavor, and rich aroma of fine old Government Java.

A ten days trial shows wonderful results and costs little.

Postum